

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7093

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

S E C R E T AMMAN 1073

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY, JO, XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING - DAMASCUS VISIT

REF: (A) AMMAN 1046, (B) BEIRUT 1603, (C) STATE 047684

1. SAW KING TOGETHER WITH RIFAI FOR A FEW MINUTES MORNING FEB 27
PRIOR TO THEIR TAKE OFF FOR LUNCH TODAY WITH ASAD IN DAMASCUS.

2. FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS REF (C) I DREW ON REF (B), MAKING THE POINT
ONLY VERY LIGHTLY THAT WE APPROVED SOME OF PAST SYRIAN ACTIVITIES,
BUT WOULD OF COURSE BE WATCHING THE SITUATION CAREFULLY IN FUTURE
(TO CONVEY THE IDEA WE COULD NOT BE PRESUMED TO APPROVE EVERYTHING
SYRIANS WOULD DO IN LEBANON). SPECIFIC POINTS WHICH I MADE
WERE: INSECURITY WILL CONTINUE; SYRIANS LIKELY TO FACE DIFFICULTIES
WITH PALESTINIANS AND LEFT WING; CRITICAL PERIOD IS BETWEEN PRESENT
AND AUGUST-SEPTEMBER WHEN NEW PRESIDENT EXPECTED TO TAKE OVER;
CHRISTIAN RIGHT HAS NOT GIVEN UP MUCH; MOSLEM LEFT HAS NOT WON
MUCH; LEFT AND JUNBLATT WILL PROBABLY BIDE TIME, BUT MAY LOOK FOR
AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE TROUBLE; TROUBLE, IF IT BREAKS OUT,
NOT LIKELY TO BE GENERALIZED, EXCEPT POSSIBLY IN BEKAS; SYRIAN
PRESENCE IN LARGE FASHION NOW LINKS PROBLEM MORE CLOSELY WITH
ARAB-ISRAEL DISPUTE; WITH A GOOD EFFORT TO REVAMP ARMY AND SECURITY
FORCES AND IN ABSENCE MAJOR FIGHTING BETWEEN NOW AND AUGUST, ARMY
THEN MAY HAVE CHANCE TO CONTAIN FUTURE OUTBREAKS AND POSSIBLY EVEN
PALESTINIAN INTERNICINE STRUGGLE IF THAT COMES (KING IS PARTICULARLY
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INTERESTED IN CAPABILITY LEBANESE MILITARY); ESSENTIAL THAT SPIRIT

1969 CAIRO ACCORDS BE MAINTAINED-- KEEPING PALESTINIANS OUT OF MAJOR INTERFERENCE IN LEBANESE POLITICS -- AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE; LIBYAN IRAQI MONEY BY ITSELF CANNOT BUY DANGEROUS LEVEL OF TROUBLE; AND THAT SAUDIS, KUWAITIS AND UAE IF THEY PUT MONEY IN FOR RECONSTRUCTION SHOULD INSIST ON STABILITY FOR FUTURE. I ENDED UP BY TELLING KING WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN WHAT HE COULD TELL US ABOUT SYRIAN FUTURE INTENTIONS, PARTICULARLY WHAT SYRIANS THOUGHT THEY WERE DOING REGARDING THE CABINET? I ALSO ASKED THEM WHAT SYRIAN INTENTIONS MIGHT BE EVENTUALLY REGARDING PALESTINIANS.

3. KING SAID THAT WHEN HE TALKED ON TELEPHONE WITH ASAD LAST WEEK, LATTER HAD INDICATED CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FRUSTRATION WITH ROLE IN LEBANON AND SAID THAT AFTER CABINET IS WORKED OUT, HE WANTS TO GET HIS PEOPLE (KHADDAM AND CO) OUT. THEY WILL WANT TO LEAVE THE SAIQA AND PLA IN TO TRY TO CONTROL THINGS, BUT HAVE A FEAR THAT THEY MAY BE GETTING MIRED IN, THE KING SAID. RIFAI ADDED TO THIS POINT SAYING THA JORDANIANS HAD HEARD THAT WHEN ASAD SAW JUNBLATT AND THE OTHERS A WEEK AGO HE GAVE THEM A TERRIFIC TONGUE LASHING. JUNBLATT HAD BEEN EQUIALLY DIRECT AND TOLD SYRIANS THAT THEY COULD NOT INSIST ON PUTTING RADICAL GROUP LEADERS LIKE QULAILAT INTO THE CABINET AS KHADDAM WAS TRYING TO DO. APPARENTLY SYRIANS ACCEPTED THIS POINT AND INDICATED TO RIFAI THEY WERE MORE WILLING TO WORK THROUGH JUNBLATT AND OTHER MORE ESTABLISHED TYPES. KING SAID THAT HE EXPECTS TO HAVE MORE THOROUGH READOUT WHEN HE GETS BACK AND ASKED RIFAI TO MAKE IT A POINT TO GIVE ME A DEFRIEF.

4. I ALSO INDICATED THAT WE WERE VERY INTERESTED IN WHAT SYRIANS HAD IN MIND IN THE UN, WITH REGARD TO UNDOF IN PARTICULAR, AND RESPECTING PEACE IN THE AREA. THEY INDICATED THEY TOO WERE INTERESTED IN THAT POINT, BUT ALSO NO LESS INTERESTED IN WHAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE DOING. THEY SAID THEY HOPED BY THE TIME THET RETURNED FROM THEIR VISIT TO THE US THEY WOULD HAVE AN ANSWER TO THE LATTER POINT AND INDICATED THEY WOULD BE GLAD TO TRY TO FILL US IN ON SYRIAN THINKING.

5. PRIOR TO SUBSTANTIVE CONVERSATION ABOVE, I MADE A SPECIAL POINT OF TELLING KING THAT WE WERE GRATEFUL FOR THE PRSONAL ASSISTANCE OF PRESIDENT ASAD AND SYRIAN COS SHIHABI IN OBTAINING THE RELEASE OF GALLAGHER AND DYKES. I RECALLED FOR THE KING THE DETAILS OF THE CASE AND SAID THAT SECRETARY HAD SENT
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PERSONAL MESSAGES TO SYRIANS, BUT IF HE CARED TO MENTION OUR DEEP APPRECIATION OFR THESE EFFORTS HE SHOULD FEEL FREE TO DO SO.
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